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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 002111

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [PREL](#) [ETTC](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY EAGER TO OPERATIONALIZE SPACE COOPERATION

REF: DAO ANKARA 1723 (DTG 231112 MAR 04)

(U) Classified by Pol-Mil Counselor Timothy Betts, reasons 1.4, b/d.

1. (C) Summary: PolMilOff met with Turkish Air Force (TUAF) Col. Yavuz Goker April 7 to discuss the status of US-Turkey space cooperation. Goker said the TUAF had decided what it needed in a space program and was now considering how to get there. He outlined Turkey's goals in the field of space but noted that operationalizing the US-Turkey partnership would be necessary to make the pending US-TU Agreement "meaningful." End Summary.

2. (C) Turkish Air Force Colonel Yavuz Goker told PolMilOff April 7 that he was pleased with the progress Turkey had made in the last three years on enhancing Turkey's space program. Specifically the GOT had drafted a law establishing a space agency within the TUAF that was almost ready to go to Parliament, drafted a National Space Policy, and drafted a Military Space Concept. GEN Firtina, Commander of the TUAF, was eager to sign the US-TU Space Agreement, which Goker understood could complete its congressional notification process in Washington as early as May 10. Nevertheless, the GOT understood the agreement was merely a framework for cooperation and was therefore somewhat disappointed that there were no operational activities included and very little assistance from the US promised. Goker said he hoped to persuade his leadership that the agreement was "worthwhile" with tangible cooperative projects in the near future.

3. (C) Goker outlined Turkey's priorities in space in the following order:  
-- Optical Camera Remote Sensing -- he noted the GOT could start by receiving images from US satellites, then graduate to a cooperative satellite project, then develop its own domestic capacity;  
-- SAR Remote Sensing;  
-- X-Band or EHF Communication Satellites (Turkey's current communications systems are expected to last until 2010, so this is not a priority until then);  
-- Satellite Early Warning Systems.

4. (C) Goker said Turkey's first priority toward achieving the above capabilities was training. He noted that 3-4 trainees per year for one- to six-month courses would provide Turkey's fledgling space agency a good foundation. However, he had recently been informed that the long-term training at US military institutions in which TUAF was interested was not available to foreigners. Goker said that if the only US training available to TUAF was at universities, he didn't see the need to cooperate with the USG on this, because anyone could register and attend if they paid the required fees. Unless the decision was reversed, TUAF would not seek any training in the US. (Note: The specific courses TUAF wants are US-only. TUAF has the option of having the courses tailored to their needs but this option is cost prohibitive. End Note.)

5. (C) Goker reiterated throughout the meeting that Turkey was keen to cooperate primarily with the US, although offers from India, Russia, and Israel (all of which were less expensive) were also received. He envisioned a Joint Strike Fighter-type buy-in program in which Turkey could co-develop and eventually co-use satellites, not to have just one satellite but to build up its own domestic capabilities over the long term. Turkey awaited a list of planned US projects that it might be able to buy in to. Goker hoped that Turkey would not have to resort to working with countries other than the US on such projects.

6. (C) Goker said putting a Turkish astronaut in space was a low priority in the TUAF Military Space Concept Paper. As a matter of national pride, they had included it as a long-term goal. They understood from NASA that there would be no space for a Turkish astronaut until at least 2014, which Goker believed gave Turkey plenty of time to select and train Turkish pilots.

17. (C) Comment: Goker is pleased with the progress of Turkey's space program and realizes that cooperation with any other country besides the US would be "second tier." Nevertheless, the TUAF is concerned that the US commitment to cooperation with Turkey might be flaccid. Proposals for co-development projects with Turkey would go a long way toward keeping the Turkish space program firmly in the US corner.  
EDELMAN